

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Mae Itamura, 74, retired liquor store owner, Lower Paia

"I have to have all kinds of motivation so that I can make money by pulling our customers to my place. To do that, you have to do something that all the other stores don't do. That's the secret of good business. You know what I mean, yeah? There's all kinds of way...some people have that motivation, try new ways or like that, and think how this business works..."

Mae (Morita) Itamura, Japanese, was born August 23, 1905, in Nahiku, Maui. Her father was an employee of the East Maui Irrigation Company. The second of ten children, she and her family moved to Kaheka in 1919. In 1923, after her father's death, Itamura quit school and began working for Kitagawa Motors in Spreckelsville as a gasoline pump attendant. The following year, she worked as a clerk at Tam Chong Store in Lower Paia. A few months later, Itamura became a bookkeeper at Maui Dry Goods in Lower Paia. Later, when Maui Dry Goods established a liquor department, she was put in charge of it.

While working for Maui Dry Goods, Itamura held a variety of side jobs in order to help support her family. She worked for a touring theatre group and as an insurance salesperson. With the capital accumulated at these jobs and at Maui Dry Goods, Itamura in 1937, started her own store, Paia Liquor Store in Lower Paia. In addition to running the business, she helped many of her customers by doing their annual income tax returns.

Today, Paia Liquor Store is still in operation, run by Itamura's nephew. She left the business in 1972, but still lives behind the store with her husband, Masao.

Itamura leads an active retired life. She golfs daily, takes Tai Chi lessons, and enjoys reading and cooking.

Tape No. 7-17-1-79

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mae Itamura (MI)

November 12, 1979

Lower Paia, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Mae Itamura. Today is November 12, 1979, and we're at her home in Lower Paia, Maui.

Can you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

MI: I was born in Maui--Nahiku, under the waterfall. Honomanu Waterfall. In 1905. August twenty-third. So, makes me seventy-four years old. (Laughs)

WN: Still young. What was your father and mother doing at Nahiku?

MI: Ah, he was a contractor and had about thirteen or fourteen workers under him. And they built tunnels and ditches for East Maui Irrigation Company.

WN: I see. And he came from Hiroshima?

MI: Yeah. Both of them from Hiroshima.

WN: Did they come together at the same time?

MI: No. My father came (first). He supposed to go back (under) three years contract, but he met my mother in Kula, you see. I don't know where they got married, though. It's so long. She was a widow at that time with two children, so my father married her. And then, I was the first child. I had ten brothers and sisters, but (five) died. Only five left, yeah?

WN: When your father first came to Hawaii, what was his first job?

MI: I don't think I remember that. He came (under) contract to HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company], the paper said, eh? You saw that contract . . .

WN: Oh, this is immigration papers?

MI: Yeah. Maybe that's why he was in Nahiku building that. That's

part of HC&S, you see. Water---Irrigation Company [East Maui Irrigation Company].

WN: The thirteen, fourteen people he had working under him, these were manual laborers?

MI: Yeah, manual. (There was a) cave behind the waterfall and they live there, see? My mother used to cook. That's where I was born.

WN: How long did you stay at Nahiku?

MI: I really don't know. I forgot, I think. Or they didn't tell me.

WN: Do you remember anything about Nahiku?

MI: No. Because I was born there. Then, not long (after that) we moved to Kaeleku, Hana Plantation--I think that's where they moved next--I was about ten or eleven. I was going to school already. But in between, I don't know where they went. I don't think they stayed in that waterfall place (for) long, you know.

WN: Do you know why they moved to Hana?

MI: Oh, that's Hana, see? Part of Hana. Not Hana Town, but Kaeleku, Hana.

WN: It's near Haiku?

MI: No. Not so near. Near to Hana (Town)--about maybe forty miles. Kaeleku. Now, that's all obsolete. And that's where I went to school.

WN: What was your father doing in . . .

MI: Raising cane. Sugar cane.

WN: He was an independent cane grower?

MI: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

WN: Then you moved to Kaheka [a camp just above Paia]?

MI: Yeah. He [MI's father] was the first Japanese man to organize strike, like that. Because the pay was so small. So, he had to leave there and come to Kaheka. You see? That's Paia.

WN: He had to leave Hana?

MI: Yeah. (To) work for HC&S. Then, while he was there, there was another big strike all over Hawaii. So, my father joined and helped them. So he got kicked out again (laughs) from Kaheka. Then we went to Lower Paia. (Laughs)

WN: He got kicked out of Hana?

MI: Yeah. Hana first time, then Kaheka again.

WN: What kind of things did he do?

MI: He (helped) organize that strike. Before that, nobody believed in striking. They just get kicked around, you know. They come with whip, he used to tell us. They (were) sick, like that. Not him, but the rest of them. They treat 'em mean, you know, those days. Then the whole Hawaiian Islands got big strike.

WN: About 1909?

MI: No.

WN: Or 1919 [1920]?

MI: About that, I think. Then we moved to up here [Paia]. That is (where) Maui Dry Goods (Paia branch was). I had to quit high school, and then I started working (in this store).

WN: So your father got kicked out of the Hana side and went to Kaheka?

MI: Then he got fired again.

WN: He got fired again. So, he started organizing again?

MI: No, no. They organized in Honolulu. And then, he helped Maui people organize on Maui mostly. There were about three or four (men who) got fired from plantation. The heads of them.

WN: So he found work . . .

MI: He bought that small hotel in Lower Paia. But he (didn't) know business.

WN: Let's see. That was about 1923?

MI: Yeah, yeah. About that.

WN: He started a hotel and then what happened?

MI: He took sick, and then the hotel went bankrupt. So, I had to work from (that time), see? Going to school, I work in that big store in front the hotel. That used to be [Paia] Mercantile. I paid all his bills. He had lots of bills, you know, those days.

WN: You said, "He doesn't know business." What do you mean by that?

MI: He (didn't) know how to run hotel or store. That takes experience and know-how. My mother used to cook. Cooking was all right, but

you had to figure out. You had to be good bookkeeper in any business, you know.

WN: And he wasn't good at that?

MI: No. In the meantime, he had heart trouble or something. And half of the time, he couldn't work. So, I quit high school. That was 1930---twenty . . .

WN: Nineteen twenty-three [1923], yeah?

MI: Yeah. Nineteen twenty-three [1923]. Yeah. I had six months more [of high school] to go. Then they gave us the house behind (the Maui Dry Goods Store, rent free). I stayed about--how many months?--thirteen years. Thirteen years, I stayed. I told you. Maui Dry Goods. Then I opened my own liquor store.

WN: Where was your father's hotel?

MI: You know the corner--Wimpy's Corner used to be. When you come up [toward Paia sugar mill].

WN: On the corner of Baldwin Avenue and Hana Highway?

MI: Yeah. On this side. Right across that [from Wimpy's Corner].

WN: How big was the hotel?

MI: Upstairs, maybe ten or eleven rooms, that's all.

WN: So, did the hotel close down?

MI: Yeah, closed down. And we moved to one house in Lower Paia. Oh yeah, that's the time I worked Kitagawa.

WN: Kitagawa Service Station?

MI: Yeah, yeah. Before I came. Then I worked Tam Chong [Store]. Then I went to Maui Dry Goods.

WN: Okay. So, when you worked Kitagawa Service Station in 1923, what did you do there?

MI: Sell gasoline. You know, pump gasoline. Fix the tires. Tubes, like that. You patch up. You rub (the surface of the tube) with sandpaper, and then put patch on. Yeah. I stayed there. I lived there with them.

WN: You lived with them . . .

MI: Yeah.

WN: . . . in Spreckelsville?

MI: (Yes. The town of Spreckelsville is gone now.) They moved to Kahului. And our hotel there (in Paia was) torn down long time ago, too.

WN: You quit school to work in the service station, yeah?

MI: Yeah. Had six months more to go (to graduate).

WN: How did you feel about quitting school?

MI: Oh, I didn't want to quit. I was going to University of Hawaii. My girlfriend Elsie Kuramoto's father wanted me to continue school.

(He said), "I can support you."

But [there was] nobody to support my whole family, so (I told him), "I don't want to bother you."

Only me, sure, that's all right. He wanted to support me to go to school. I couldn't do that. Leave (my family), no. My brothers were all small, too.

WN: How about your mother? Could she work?

MI: No. She never worked in her life. From Japan, you know. The father had a glass factory, and they had maid. She didn't know how to cook, she said, when she came from Japan. She came as picture bride for (Mr.) Kubo, I think. My blind sister and the old man I (am) supporting now (are his children).

WN: She was married to someone else?

MI: Yeah. Then he died, so she married my father. Then I came. (Laughs) Interesting. (Laughs)

WN: Okay. So, while you were pumping gas in that service station, was that sort of unusual for a girl to do that kind of work in those days?

MI: I think so. And unusual to get the license too--liquor license. (Young girls) had---they didn't want to give me, you know.

WN: No, but when you were working in the gas station, did you have any trouble getting the job?

MI: No. When you need the job, you have to do all kind. No sense (to) wait, wait. Then if something else comes, then you just move.

(Sound of airplane in background)

WN: Okay, from the Kitagawa Service Station, you moved to working in the Tam Chong Store?

MI: Tam Chong Store, yeah.

WN: This is in Lower Paia?

MI: Yeah. That's where this Economy Store is.

WN: Now?

MI: Uh huh [yes]. Used to be dry goods store [Tam Chong Store]. Now it's grocery store [Economy Store].

WN: What did you do in the Tam Chong Store?

MI: Saleslady. Sell dresses and coats, like that.

WN: How did you get the job?

MI: Oh, they needed (workers), so I went and see the boss. Tam Hoy.

WN: Did you know anybody?

MI: Yeah. I knew the Chinese (man). He died, though. I think two years ago.

WN: What did they sell in that Tam Chong Store?

MI: Dry goods.

WN: Like . . .

MI: Yeah, cloth. Dresses. Ladies' blouses and all kind. Shoes, too, I think. (Pause) You want me to continue?

WN: If you remember anything else that the store sold.

MI: Oh. No, I think that's about all.

WN: Did that store have people delivering or taking orders to the camps?

MI: I don't think so. They just---some charge and some cash, yeah? If the boss knows the person, they charge. Those days, mostly charge. At the end of the month, they used to pay.

WN: Were there other stores in that area selling that kind of things?

MI: Yeah, the Mercantile.

WN: Paia Mercantile?

MI: Yeah. The store right across my father's hotel. They were there long time. And there was Paia Store.

WN: Oh, the plantation store?

MI: Yeah, plantation store.

WN: This Mr. Tam Chong or Tam Hoy who ran the store, do you know what happened to him? Did he move out of Paia?

MI: After closing, I don't know, but I remember him selling cars. (For a) long time, he sold cars. Then the children grew up, the wife died, and he (moved) to Honolulu. I don't know what he was doing there.

WN: And there were a lot of other Chinese stores in that area in those days?

MI: Yeah. That Quon Sun Loy Store. That Lum, Mr. Lum, used to own. Small store, but he put all those kids to high schools and colleges. One went even to Shanghai or someplace, but he died there. I think those two were the only Chinese stores.

And (the old) Maui Dry Goods used to have (the same kind of merchandise). Up here [Paia], you see. That's the new one, down there.

WN: Maui Dry Goods used to be Upper Paia?

MI: (No), right here [Lower Paia].

WN: So, you only remember about two or three Chinese Stores at that time?

MI: Yeah, but Mr. T.S. Shinn remember better, I think. (Chuckles) You say you going see him, eh?

WN: Yeah. Okay, then you worked at Tam Chong Store for only about a year.

MI: I think so. Yeah, not so long.

WN: Then you moved to Maui Dry Goods?

MI: Yeah, I was bookkeeper there, or salesgirl, buyer, all kinds.

WN: How did you get the job at Maui Dry Goods?

MI: Same. I went and look for job, they gave me. But cheap pay--about eighty-five dollars a month. But those days, that supposed to be big money, you know. (Chuckles) Then I think they raise me to about \$100, \$100-something. But had enough to eat. Five of us.

WN: Five of you is who?

MI: My father, my mother, myself, and my two brothers. No, more I think. No, my (blind) sister was then married. And the other brother was working in the hospital.

WN: You started as a bookkeeper at Maui Dry Goods. How did you learn bookkeeping?

MI: I learn at high school. I used to take business. Typewriting and bookkeeping.

WN: So, when you were in high school, did you know that you were going to go in this type of work?

MI: Yeah. But what I really wanted was to be a sugar technologist because that seems to be interesting. That's math, you see? Mostly. Arithmetic. I used to like arithmetic. Figuring and all, too. But I couldn't make it.

WN: Why couldn't you make it?

MI: I had to quit high school.

WN: Oh, you were going to major in sugar technology in college?

MI: In University of Hawaii. That's where my girlfriend's father wanted me to continue. Not in Mainland. Cost more money, I think.

WN: Let's talk about Maui Dry Goods now. First of all, who owned that store?

MI: It started with Joaquin Garcia's mother's store. Then they sold it, and this company was formed. Maui Dry Goods--MDG--Maui Dry Goods and Grocery Company of Maui. And Joaquin Garcia--Mrs. Rodrigues' son--was the president. Mr. T.S. Shinn was treasurer and John Dolim was vice-president. Then Mr. Garcia died--I don't know what year--and John Dolim took (over).

WN: And it started out in Paia?

MI: No, in Wailuku, it started. Then they had branches in Lahaina, Kula, and Kahului, about two. And Wailuku, they had two (or) three. (They sold Oldsmobile cars and auto parts.) Then they had one (branch) in Haiku and one in Paia.

WN: How big was the store in Paia?

MI: We had upstairs. Upstairs, we kept those coffins and all (kinds of furniture). We used to sell that, too.

WN: Coffins?

MI: For dead people. Coffins and furniture upstairs, and then groceries and dry goods downstairs. Quite big store. We had about nine or ten workers.

WN: The coffins--how much would one coffin cost?

MI: You mean to sell? Oh, those days (they were) cheap. Seventy-five dollars, like that. Seventy-five. Of course, the cheaper ones are not draped and all that. Not draped with velvet and all kinds. You know, the fancy kind cost seventy-five dollars. Now, it's four, five hundred dollars, yeah?

WN: So you sold the plain kind and the fancy kind?

MI: Plain kind, I don't remember (well), but (they cost) not more than fifteen dollars.

WN: What did the plain kind look like?

MI: (They were made with) one by twelve [pieces], (six-foot) length. Long box. Six feet.

WN: Was just the box?

MI: Yeah.

WN: Where would you get the coffins from?

MI: Buy (them) from wholesaler (in Honolulu). They camp around; get all the orders, see? Groceries and everything. Even dry goods.

WN: These salesmen came from Honolulu?

MI: Yeah. The Honolulu wholesalers get [goods] from the Mainland, and they distribute all over Hawaii. They always carry one satchel, and then they took orders; then (the goods) come. They sent straight from Mainland, some big orders, but small orders came from Honolulu.

WN: Was it your job to deal with these wholesalers?

MI: Yeah. I had to order what we need. Mostly dry goods I used to (order). And the boss takes care the groceries.

WN: So, how did you determine what to order?

MI: Well, when we ran short, we ordered. We used to sell lots of records, too. Whenever the new records came out, we sold.

WN: But when it came to ordering something new, would it be your job to order it?

MI: Yeah, we used to make good in the store. Then, we moved down there [to another location]. Nineteen thirty-two [1932], because the prohibition was stopped. Roosevelt came in. So they had the liquor department, too. I took care of that. That's where I learned the liquor business. And I thought that's the best business because (merchandise) won't rotten. Won't get spoiled.

WN: Oh, I see. The customers that used to come into the store, were they mostly people from the [plantation] camps?

MI: Yeah, from the plantation. The plantation and (customers) in Lower Paia. Then once in a while we had big sales, and, oh, we had to work until 12 o'clock at night.

WN: What kind of sale?

MI: Dry goods sales. You see, [what] we cannot sell, we cut down and put on sale.

WN: Would most people pay cash or credit?

MI: On sale, was all cash and couldn't bring back. Yeah. We had quite a lot of good customers. Charge, you know, collect end of the month.

WN: How would you know who to let charge?

MI: That, the boss had to okay. Charge. And if I knew him personally, I charge him.

WN: What would you do with the bad accounts?

MI: Oh, we gave to the collectors. Then (went) through the court, and then they collected 25 percent every month for us. And they paid the cost of court and all that.

WN: So, if they ran up a certain bill, they wouldn't have to pay the whole bill at the end of the month?

MI: Yeah. Sometimes they won't pay for one whole month, but somehow, they had to pay. Otherwise, we didn't give credit.

WN: Could they pay little by little?

MI: Yeah, on the balance. And then keep on getting the month supply.

WN: [So], Maui Dry Goods sold groceries, clothing . . .

MI: Dry goods, coffins, furniture. All kinds. Then, later on, they added Oldsmobile cars. Automobiles.

WN: Where would they display the cars?

MI: They had one department. Automotive department.

WN: This was way back when you started in 1924?

MI: No. Maybe around 1929, 1930. I think so. I don't remember.

WN: What kind of groceries did they sell over there? I mean, did they

sell Japanese foods, too?

MI: Yeah, Japanese foods, but mostly salt salmon, codfish because (we had) mostly Portuguese customers. This (was a) Portuguese store, you see? Salt salmon, the big one, was thirty-five cents. Nowadays, cost thirty-five dollars, I think, those things. Expensive. And can goods--salmon, tuna, and beans, red beans, and all kinds. Flour, baking powder.

WN: But mostly Portuguese came to the store?

MI: Yeah. Few were Japanese, but mostly Portuguese. And the workers were all Portuguese, too. Mostly. Except me, I think.

WN: Why was it that mostly Portuguese came into the store?

MI: Because (this was) Portuguese concern. They all get stocks in there. You know, they own so many percent. They still do, I think, those people. [MDG is still operating today.] And they tell their friends to go to that store. Portuguese Store. (Laughs)

WN: Was the Portuguese camp nearby?

MI: Yeah. Up here, lots of Portuguese. Even now, there's plenty Portuguese. You'd be surprised how many Portuguese.

WN: So, out of all the customers at Maui Dry Goods when you were working there, what percentage you think were Portuguese?

MI: Maybe about seventy-five. Yeah, mostly.

WN: That store deliver and take orders, too?

MI: Yeah. That's a main thing. We go to the camp, and I don't think they had branch in Makawao side. They had nine or ten [branch stores]. Nine. I don't remember. I don't think they had in Makawao.

WN: So they had to go out to Makawao [to take orders]?

MI: Yeah, Makawao, Keahua, lots of camps all around. This district was big. But they all [moved] to Kahului--that Dream City [after 1948]. Dream City (was built). Their stores were all over the place.

WN: You said they sold a lot of salt salmon, codfish, because that's what the Portuguese ate?

MI: Potatoes. Yeah. Irish potatoes and flour. They made bread, eh? All kinds of groceries. They come in big barrel, you know, Warren. Fifty-gallon barrels, those salt salmon. They come wet, not dry like codfish. There's some wet ones, too, but not so wet like salt salmon. Codfish.

WN: I suppose they carried rice, too?

MI: Oh yeah, rice. Rice, lots of rice. By bag. Those days were only two seventy-five [\$2.75], three and a half [\$3.50] like that a bag.

WN: For 100-pound bag?

MI: Yeah. Cheap.

WN: Good, eh? You know the people who went out to the camps to take orders, did they speak Portuguese?

MI: Yeah, most of them did. And then they spoke English, too. (Pause) Yeah, that was a long time ago. (Laughs) I'm lucky to be alive yet. I think two of us are left out of nineteen [employees] that I know used to work with me.

Everything goes on the tape?

WN: Yeah. Sure. How would you know when to order something new?

MI: The dry goods? Well, (the salesman brought) the samples (and says these are) coming out and all that. Then if I liked it, I ordered. Usually they buy--something new.

WN: Okay, what do you mean by "dry goods"? Besides clothing?

MI: Cloth (dress goods), that's the main thing. By yards. Yardage. Like Indian Head. You don't remember, but your mother maybe remembers, yeah? Indian Head, those days, are ten cents (a yard), you know. Indian Head cloth. That was a famous white material--thick kind. You (sewed) dresses, or you made pillow cases, all kinds. Ten cents a yard, we used to sell. Came in all colors, too, but white, we used to sell the most. And cotton yard goods. And printed kinds, yeah?

And what else? Before Christmas, I order lots of toys and presents--with mirror and powder sets, like that. For presents, they bought and gave. Oh yeah, and we used to carry plates, too. Dinner plates and all those fancy ones, cheap ones. Teapots, and teakettles, and all those.

Yeah, that was pretty big store. Next to that plantation store, I think. The plantation store was the biggest. They had upstairs, too, and downstairs. Theirs was entirely different way of business, you know. Because lots of them [plantation store customers] are private growers--what you call that? Individual. They raised and sold the sugar crops---sugar cane to the plantation. They owned their land [the land was owned by the sugar company], and then they planted so many acres. Then they harvested that, and then they put on train and brought to the mill, see? Then they scaled the tonnage and they have credit (on same). Once a year, they paid for all those groceries.

WN: Oh, you're talking about kompang?

MI: Yeah. Kompang money. You know, yeah? Somebody told you, yeah?

WN: Oh yeah. So, these kompang people, did you give them special credit?

MI: No, we didn't have any. Because they go to Paia Store. You know, plantation store.

WN: They went there because . . .

MI: Yeah, they charge, yeah? I don't think Maui Dry Goods can afford the one-year credit to so many people.

WN: Eighteen months?

MI: Eighteen months? Maybe two years, those days. Yeah.

WN: So Maui Dry Goods didn't give credit to kompang people?

MI: I don't think so. I never see that happen. (Pause) Yeah, those days, everything was made ugly ways. So many thousand dollars they [kompang workers] get, and on the way, somebody beat them up and then steal that money. All kinds (of troubles).

WN: That happened a lot?

MI: No, not many, but I heard once or twice. And then, they lose that money. All cash, you see. They don't give checks. Then one of our boys found, I think, \$2,200.

He say, "I'm lucky. I get \$2,200. I found 'em on the road."

I say, "Let me see the envelope with the kompang money." I tell 'em, "You know, they slave long time. The whole family depend on that money. You better give back."

He won't give back. He bought one car, and the car turned (over in accident). Then, I think he got fired. All kind of misfortunes because I think he did wrong, yeah? That's why I never do wrong. (Laughs)

WN: That's a lot of money to lose.

MI: Yeah. I don't see why he didn't return that. I'd be too glad to return. He may (have) given him \$100 [as reward]. Even he doesn't give nothing, he supposed to be happy. They slaved for that. Working hard for that money. But those days, that's big money. Two thousand [dollars] is just like five, six thousand or more [today], I think.

WN: How did Maui Dry Goods advertise or let people know what they're selling?

MI: We put a big sign outside the store. And in the paper, too--on Maui News, we put.

WN: Would you put it in Portuguese, too?

MI: No. Only in English. Because mostly, they are second generation. They reach there about thirty [1830], forty [1840], already. Because they came way before Chinese and Japanese came. I think the Japanese (were) the latest one.

WN: Were there any kind of favors that the store did for the customers. Say, for example, helping them save money, or anything like that?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, I just asked if the Maui Dry Goods did any kind of special favors to the customers?

MI: I don't think so. You mean, how to save money and all that, you say? No, I don't think so. I don't remember. I did, though, lots of special favors when I had my own business [i.e., Paia Liquor Store].

WN: Oh, okay, we'll get into that later. How were the prices at Maui Dry Goods in comparison to, say, Paia Plantation Store and the other independent stores?

MI: I think about the same. There was not much difference because they were about the same--prices in stores. But more customers go to Paia Store because they have all kinds of different type of merchandise. Better quality and all kinds, yeah? Groceries and even the dry goods.

WN: Since you were the buyer, did you feel that you had to keep up with Paia Plantation . . .

MI: Yeah. You cannot buy too high-class kind because cost too much money, eh? But few, I used to buy. Then my boss has to okay that, and [then it] goes through.

WN: Did you go to Paia Store a lot to see what they were carrying?

MI: No. I had no time. Sometimes, I used to pass there, I go in. If I have the chance, I go and see.

WN: Can you explain your billing system?

MI: We had the statement. We attach the original (sales slip) and then mail it.

WN: Oh, you mail it?

MI: Yeah, to the customers that they didn't go and took orders. But the ones they took orders and delivered to, they [order takers] just bring the statement [to the customer], and they pay, you see?

WN: Wait. Say that again, now. The ones that [you] take order and deliver to . . .

MI: Yeah. They [order takers] collected (the money) with the bill--statement, see? Big pile of them, you go and distribute them when they deliver their orders.

WN: Once a month, they go to each house?

MI: Yeah. Then they pay. After payday, they go.

WN: You remember some of the wholesalers that you dealt with?

MI: Yeah. There's Davies [Theo H. Davies]--Mr. Thomas used to come. And then, on Von Hamm Young Dry Goods is Mr. Piersiq. I think they are all retired now. I forgot the American Factors--that's a big, red-faced man. Had three or four more. They used to come every month. And some Japanese grocery people, too, I think. I don't remember because the boss takes care that.

WN: This is Honolulu?

MI: Yeah.

WN: Was it Hata's or Shimaya's?

MI: Must be Hata, yeah? Hata is there a long time.

WN: Did you deal with any Maui wholesalers?

MI: No, I don't think there were any Maui wholesalers, those days. After the war [World War II], they all (started the wholesale business).

WN: After the war, Maui Dry Goods became wholesaling?

MI: Yeah. They became wholesalers, and everything changed. They opened up all this new style of businesses. Like Ben Franklin and all came up.

WN: Ben Franklin was owned by Maui Dry Goods?

MI: No, no. They came up. Different type of business, you know.

WN: What do you mean, "different type"?

MI: They all in one place and then they open their shop. Like on Kahului and . . .

WN: Oh, you mean shopping centers?

MI: Yeah. Shopping centers. And if Maui Dry Goods had done that before they closed, they could have survived. But how can you compete against the big supermarkets? That's a new way of (selling) things, you know. All displayed nicely. Clean, like Longs Drugs and all that. We used to sell drugs, too, but little bit on the shelf.

Lots of business, my girlfriend, Miss Hotta, used to have. Five or six, she closed down all. Dry goods stores.

WN: About when? During the war or after the war?

MI: Yeah. After the war. She was there before the war. She was a schoolteacher, but she opened lots of dry goods shops. (Pause) Yeah, it takes lots of money to compete against them [i.e., the big stores]. Whole line of Even the fixtures are all different. You cannot just put shelves, like we did. You have to buy so many hundreds and thousands of dollars of fixtures.

WN: So, when you started at Maui Dry Goods in 1923, the store was where?

MI: Up here. Right above the (Paia branch of Bank of Hawaii). You know, the small bank--was robbed about four, five times. Famous.

WN: Oh, old Bank of Hawaii?

MI: Bank of Hawaii, yeah. It's closed now. They moved downtown.

WN: Can you describe that store? As you walk in, what . . .

MI: They had steps. It's double---upstairs, downstairs. It's kind of built high like that. (You walked on) six (concrete) steps, and you go in. And the store there, and then, there's an upstairs. Two stories.

WN: About how big was one story?

MI: Oh, quite big. I don't know exactly.

WN: Was it as big as this room?

MI: Oh, yeah, double.

WN: Twice as big as this room?

MI: Yeah, more. More than double. It's a big store.

WN: About how many feet by how many feet?

MI: How can I measure that? I don't know. I didn't measure. It's

about the same as that new one over there. That's quite big, you know.

WN: Same as what?

MI: The new one was over there. It's Ikeda Store, now. They sold it after the war.

WN: Oh, it's as big as Ikeda Store, now? That's very big, then. When did they move to the place where Ikeda Store is now?

MI: Ah, let me see. I worked there I don't know how many years. Nineteen thirty-two [1932], we had liquors. Must be around 1932 or 1933, I think. Not long. Nineteen thirty-two [1932], the liquor opened, and I think that's the same time they opened that liquor store. They made special room for that because (of liquor) department, you know. So must be before or little after 1932.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: So in 1932, Maui Dry Goods started a liquor department?

MI: I think so. That's when prohibition pau.

WN: Were you put in charge of the liquor department?

MI: Yeah.

WN: By "put in charge," what were your duties?

MI: I order and sell liquors.

WN: Did you stop doing that for the dry goods department?

MI: Yeah, same thing, I do.

WN: Did they transfer you to liquor?

MI: No, no. The liquor, but small place, you know.

WN: So you did both? Dry goods and liquor . . .

MI: Yeah. Everything, I used to do. Saleswoman for liquor, dry goods, grocery if they want. But by then, no coffins. Way before we moved, they discontinued.

WN: Why did they discontinue it?

MI: (By then, there appeared two) new mortuaries. Norman's (and Bulgo's). They all came up, I think. B-U-L-G-O.

WN: B-U-L-G-O. Bulgo's Mortuary and Norman's Mortuary came up. I see. The time that you were working at Maui Dry Goods, what changes did

you notice as far as what you folks sold? What else did you stop selling besides coffins?

MI: That's all. We sold everything. They transferred down there, and we displayed the You know, just transfer from this old store to the new one.

WN: When you started the liquor department, where did you get your liquor from?

MI: Honolulu. (Each wholesaler had franchises of different brands of liquor. Like Hawaiian Oke and Liquor Company carried Three Star Henessey Brandy and certain other brands. American Factors carried Budweiser Beer, and so on.)

WN: Hawaiian Oke?

MI: Oke and Liquor. And then . . .

WN: That was a brand or a company?

MI: Company. O-K-E. Okolehao. Oke. And Von Hamm Young had liquor department. American Factors had. Lots of wholesalers in Honolulu. They carry different brand of liquor. So, if you want Canadian Club, you buy from that (wholesaler who carried that) brand. Von Hamm Young used to carry this Olympia Beer. And Muller and Phipps, too. They carry Johnny Walker Red and Black, like that. Scotch whiskey.

Hawaiian Oke had all kinds of Hawaiian stuff. They used to make when the liquor didn't come during the war. They made with sugar and molasses, and they sold. You weren't there, so you don't know, but you ask you dad. He knows. And then they call that Hawaiian Sunshine (Whiskey).

Yeah, but time marches on, you know. There is no Primo Beer. We used to sell lots of Primo. It [the brewery] closed down, too. Nobody buying, eh? Then, Budweiser, they took away from American Factors. There is that new Eagle Distributors there in Honolulu (that handles this).

WN: They handle Budweiser?

MI: All, yeah, changed. I think Budweiser is the best-seller now.

WN: What was the best-selling beer when you first started in Maui Dry Goods?

MI: Primo. Primo. Everybody drank Primo. And (Primo) was good, those days. I don't know what happened, you know. Because the water is good in Honolulu--they get special well or something. But I don't know what happened. (Sales) went down, down, down. By two years ago, I think, they had to close down. Schlitz Beer bought that.

WN: How many cases of Primo would you order at one time for Maui Dry Goods?

MI: Those days, maybe---I don't remember exactly, but I think we sell about 1,000 case a month. See, 250 case a week, yeah? That's little bit, though. But now it is different. The population grew.

WN: So, all the times you worked at Maui Dry Goods, you have anything to say about your experiences there? How it helped you later on?

MI: Yes, because I used to work on books. Get my trial balance and all that. See, that gave me experience in bookkeeping, eh? Then I worked in the liquor [department], so I learned the liquor business from there. Dry goods, too. Anyway, buying and selling. And I always remember not to forget to be good bookkeeper. Figure out. If you don't make money, just stop. No use hanging on if you don't make money, yeah?

Lots of people, they open stores, business, but they don't know what they are doing because they do not (know accounting). It's not only buy and sell, you know. The main thing is to make money. You see, how much you make and how much can you salvage out of the profits so you can live in your old age, like that. You know, be comfortable.

Yeah, the manager taught me lots of things. To be thrifty. He (used to) tell me, "Don't waste paper," (whenever) we throw away all the old bags--paper bags and wrapping paper.

He said, "No. You straighten out (the used ones) and you use."
(Laughs) This (was a) good lesson for us. I was young then.

WN: So your bookkeeping and your knowledge of liquor, you would say, are the two most important things you learned from Maui Dry Goods?

MI: Business, yeah. Business in general. You work so many years and then still you work. You buy and sell and you don't know bookkeeping--how much profit you are making, and what percentage, and if you are going into red or black. If you don't figure that, no sense of toiling yourself.

WN: Were you bookkeeper for the whole entire store?

MI: No, no. Only for the Paia (branch).

WN: I mean, yeah, but the whole department in the Paia Store?

MI: Sometimes I went and helped Haiku (branch). Maybe just at the end of the month. Then the (head bookkeeping department was) there in Wailuku. He works in the bank, you see. Mr. Garcia. Joaquin Garcia. (He took care of accounting.)

WN: Which bank was this?

MI: Bank of Hawaii. He was the vice-president. So he took care that, see? He balanced out the books. There was a bookkeeper there. They combined the whole (business of) nine or ten stores. Maybe more, I don't remember.

Gee, when you come and ask me all these questions, just like dream, you know. (Laughs) Going into past, yeah? Good, sometimes, you remember. Reminiscent.

WN: When you were at Maui Dry Goods and you had to work with wholesalers a lot--say, in the liquor business and dry goods business--did the fact that you knew them, did it help you later on when you started your own store?

MI: Yeah. It told you, don't buy the things you cannot sell. The main idea in business is buying the best. Quick turnover, so you make money. But you leave the thing [merchandise] that cannot sell on the shelves, that's the cash staying (idle). Those drummers, they know. They know what to sell. (But a) good salesman (does not) give you bum steers. (Just) because they sell to other places, they may think we do well, too, with the product.

WN: In 1937, you decided to start your own business. Why did you make that decision?

MI: Well, I read once in the magazine that the best way to make something of your life is to be self-employed. You can be the highest-paid woman in the whole world. More you sell, you make more money, see? While you work in the store [i.e., Maui Dry Goods], it's same salary. You can't advance more than what they give.

WN: What article was this?

MI: I don't remember the magazine. I like to read a whole lot.

WN: Did you just quit Maui Dry Goods?

MI: Yeah.

WN: How did you get the building to start your store?

MI: Oh, that. I rented one small place. Right in Lower Paia. Then after a while, I opened another one on this side. I had two (stores).

WN: You had two?

MI: Yeah. Then the war came. From then on, it was good.

WN: Did you feel sure that you were going to make good money in your own business?

MI: When I started? No, I wouldn't know. I heard this Maui Dry Goods, that main stockholder didn't want me to get the license because I'm young girl and (no young single girl) in Hawaii can get that license, (those days). He said I shouldn't get the license because I'm (not qualified) to run a (liquor) store.

WN: You were born 1905, so you were thirty-two years old about.

MI: Yeah. I think that's (correct). Since then, that's forty-six [forty-two] years passed by, eh? Now 1979. About that, I think. I thought (laughs) I was young then. [MI began Paia Liquor Store in 1937, at the age of 32.]

WN: Did you say you were the first woman to get a liquor license?

MI: Yeah. Single girl.

WN: To sell liquor?

MI: Yeah, license for liquor store. That's what he said.

WN: But there were other stores, Lower Paia, that were selling liquor, huh?

MI: Yeah, but not woman owner. All men. Even in Honolulu, they didn't have, they say. That's what this fella argued. Liquor Commission. You see, they have seven liquor inspectors. One chief inspector. Three on one side and three on the other side. They tie-tie. Three of them were Portuguese people's friends, I guess. They didn't want me to have, and three wanted me to have.

And then, they told me to go ahead and order the liquor because, "We going to give you the license." The inspector told me. So, I ordered, and the liquor was down there.

WN: Down where?

MI: Down the wharf. This fella said that against the law. "She get no license and she bought the liquor."

So, the inspector said, "You can buy any amount so long you don't sell it. That's not against the law."

So the inspector voted for me, see? That was how. I got the liquor license. Three on one side, three on this side. I was lucky. This chief inspector voted for me. Until then, I wasn't sure . . .

WN: Four to three, then?

MI: Yeah, four to three. That's why I was kind of worried.

WN: What kind of things did they tell you? You know, being single and everything.

MI: Yeah, that I wouldn't know how to run the store, and (couldn't handle the customers) and all kinds, they said. (For instance, if an intoxicated man comes in, I could not sell drink to him.) Those days, women are not so equal like now. We weren't equal as men, those days. Like now, women's right and all kinds, yeah?

WN: Did you feel at that time that you were qualified?

MI: Sure. Because I worked there [Maui Dry Goods], I know what I'm doing. After I got the license, I didn't worry because I knew I can run the store. That's an easy thing.

I got this license because there were my good customers--all rich people. They wanted this good whiskeys (and drinks), like Canadian Club and all that. They [Maui Dry Goods] don't carry, see? They won't let me order that high-price stuff.

So, they told me, "Mae, you open the liquor store, then we go and buy from you." That's right. That's how I was motivated.

WN: Oh, but before at Maui Dry Goods, you didn't sell the expensive kind?

MI: No, we didn't carry those things. You know, these doctors and some bookkeepers up here. I had five backers.

They said, "Mae, you go and open, and we'll buy liquor from you."

WN: Who else did you talk to when you were starting your business? Did you have any friends helping you out?

MI: Yeah. I went to the bank. I used to work in the bank for him before that.

WN: Oh, Mr. Garcia?

MI: Yeah, that Bank of Hawaii (Paia branch). I don't know when was that. I stayed seven days--one week--and I quit. (Laughs) I was small, eh? I could not lift the books. In this bank, (too heavy). Anyway, I saw Mr. [Joseph] Trask, and he lent me the money.

WN: How much money did you need?

MI: Two thousand dollars. That was big money in those days.

WN: Well, you needed \$2,000, and what did that cover?

MI: That was for the liquor down the wharf.

WN: Oh, \$2,000 worth of liquor?

MI: Yeah.

WN: What about the store site? Did you buy, or lease, or rent?

MI: No, I rented. Rented at thirty-five dollars a month.

WN: Didn't you need money for other things, too? Like how about shelves, and things like that?

MI: Yeah. My friends helped me put shelves. No need showcase, just put shelves. And then, (I bought) one icebox for the beer.

WN: How much was the icebox?

MI: Ice box, I think three, four hundred [dollars], those days. You know, those cooler. Big cooler. But not so big. Four doors. Then five years after, all of a sudden, came the war. Nineteen forty-one [1941]. Four years, yeah?

WN: Okay, we'll get into the war maybe next time. So, the \$2,000 that you borrowed from the bank went to pay for the liquor. And the rest of the expenses, how did you get . . .

MI: Well, I had some money, too, because I used to sell insurance. Moonlighting. My brother used to take me. So I saved money from that. Sell insurance. That's moonlighting.

WN: You worked in Maui Dry Goods by day, and you sold insurance at night?

MI: Yeah. And then, I used to take some shows all around. Japanese shows. Movies and all, those days.

WN: How long did you do that?

MI: Oh, maybe four, five years. Once a month or twice a month, like that. They came from Honolulu.

WN: With movies?

MI: Yeah, with the movies (and also Japanese live shows). And then, I stand by the door and collect tickets for them. Help them when they go to the movie house, eh? Show house.

WN: Now, you used to work for who? For that?

MI: At night? That's moonlighting.

WN: No, I mean, you ordered the movies yourself?

MI: No, Mr. Matsuo (show man) used to bring. Matsuo.

WN: Who did you work for when you were showing the movies?

MI: He brings the show people (or Japanese movies). Then I get ready for them--hotel and where to stay. Then we hire the car, and we went to all the camps.

WN: And show movies?

MI: Yeah, movies or those singing (dancing and acting shows), like that, they had. Japanese singing. Naniwa-bushi. Naniwa-bushi, they call that. Japanese movie. Oh, Ishikawa Goemon and all those old (historic moving) pictures. Kabuki pictures.

WN: So, just you and Mr. Matsuo used to go in a car and go to the different camps to show movies?

MI: No. We go with the show people. The camera operator (and narrator), and all together. And we set up. If movie, it shows the movie. They have the movie screen.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, they had the screen. Then what else did they have?

MI: The movie machine to grind the films.

WN: Oh, was hand . . .

MI: Yeah, with the screen. Outdoor. But in the movie theater, he doesn't have to do that because they have their own machine.

WN: So you would go to all the various camps . . .

MI: Camps, and then show those old pictures. You know, kabuki. Shijūshichi Shi no Seppuku Monogatari [Tale of the Forty-seven Retainers] picture.

WN: It would be silent movies?

MI: Yeah.

WN: Would there be somebody narrating?

MI: Yeah. We had one narrating, always.

WN: So would you show the movies indoors all the time?

MI: No, outdoors sometimes if doesn't rain. But if that camp had a theater, we played in the theater. Those days we had lots of small places, you know. Keahua, Pulehu, Kailua 1, Kailua 2, Camp 10, Camp 4, Camp 2. All no more now, see?

WN: If there wasn't a movie theater in the camp, you would show it outside?

MI: Outside, yeah. Everybody came. Filipinos and all.

WN: Would there be a shelter or anything like that?

MI: No. That's what I say. Like Molokai, you know. You were there? Outdoor one. If the rain come, they refund you the ticket.

WN: Well, if it's outdoors, how do you keep people from just walking in and looking at the . . .

MI: They had the bench lined up. We borrowed the benches. But most of the time, they have (shows in) the theater. Good shows, we played in the theater.

WN: How often would you go to one camp?

MI: I'd say once or twice a month. Sometimes, none (in the following) month.

WN: How much was one ticket?

MI: Oh, only thirty-five, forty cents. Cheap. Children are all free.

WN: About how many people would come to see the movie?

MI: Sometimes about 100, sometimes 75. It depended on what kind of movie (we were showing).

WN: You said that you would get 10 percent of the . . .

MI: Gross, yeah.

WN: Gross receipts.

MI: So, if they made \$500, I made \$50. Not bad.

WN: But what would your job be?

MI: Well, I went with them. Collected the tickets, got ready where they were to stay, like that.

WN: How many of you would be traveling around?

MI: Maybe about ten years.

WN: No, how many people?

MI: Oh, at least three or four. Get the interpreter, the boss, and the operator. Then I went to sell insurance.

WN: How much money would you make selling insurance?

MI: Twenty percent of the first premium. So if they pay \$200 a year, I got forty dollars, eh? So, more I sold, more money I made.

WN: How would you sell? Would you go house to house?

MI: Yeah. I used my technique. I (had a brochure) with the pictures. You know, all kinds. The mother crying for the daughter after they had accident, (and so forth). You have to actually let them see the consequences. If you don't have insurance, then you don't have anything. I used to bring this pamphlet every time--not pamphlet, but brochures in the book--and show them all the pictures. Usually, they (would) buy.

WN: Would you sell to Japanese and Filipinos?

MI: Yeah, Filipinos, (Japanese), all kinds. I like to sell. I had no hard time selling. Somehow, if I want to sell anything, I'll get rid of that. So, so long you make up your mind, you can do anything, Warren, in this world. You remember that.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

Tape No. 7-38-2-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mae Itamura (MI)

February 28, 1980

Lower Paia, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Mae Itamura. Today is February 28, 1980, and we're at her home in Lower Paia, Maui.

Okay, last time, we were talking about [how] you were in the movie business, going around and showing movies to the different camps. How did you get started in that line of work?

MI: Well, I have to look for all kinds of other ways to have some income to look after my brothers, and father, and mother.

WN: Were you the only person working in your family?

MI: Yes. My brothers were going to school (at that time).

WN: The income you were making at Maui Dry Goods, was that enough?

MI: Not much, I think. I had to buy clothes, and food, and (pay) rent, and all kinds, you know. (Chuckles) And my father owed so much money. Those days, they had tanomoshi. You bid so much interest, and then, the highest bidder--that month--win that \$50, or \$60, (or \$100). If \$10 each person or five persons at \$20, that (amounted to \$100). That's the way they used to do--tanomoshi. If I don't pay, it's shame for me, see? I could not just let it go, so I had to pay. I paid all his debts, you know.

WN: You had to pay the five dollars per month for tanomoshi?

MI: No, more than that. Maybe about \$100, because he had \$1,000. Some \$200, and some \$300 (that he had drawn and spent).

WN: Oh, he was in more than one tanomoshi?

MI: Yes. (Chuckles) To buy a hotel, (he needed the cash). He didn't know how to cook or to run a hotel because (as he was) a contractor and sugar planter, (he had no experience in business).

WN: You were telling me last time that he was not a very good manager

or businessman.

MI: Yes.

WN: How much were you making at Maui Dry Goods?

MI: I think, big pay, those days. Eighty-five dollars a month.

WN: At the same time you were working Maui Dry Goods, you went with the movies?

MI: Yes, moonlighting at night, you see. And (selling) insurance, too.

WN: So, did you have three jobs at one time, then?

MI: I think was four. I used to go and help at Mercantile. That was a Japanese big store (carrying) dry goods and all that.

WN: Lower Paia. Paia Mercantile?

MI: Paia Mercantile, yes. I used to help them whenever I can.

WN: What did you do there?

MI: Oh, sometimes, bookkeeping, and sometimes, selling.

WN: Where did you find the time to work all these jobs?

MI: I don't know how I used to do that. And then, I got sick, and I went to Kula Sanitarium. I recuperated about four months, I think. I thought I really had TB or something, but no. I was lucky. I didn't go to the TB sanitarium, but they had these restorium, they call that, to have rest. After that, I just took over the insurance mostly, because that's big money and I didn't have to go here and there.

WN: So, you kept the insurance business?

MI: Yes, helped the agents to sell, and I got the commission. Whoever sells make the commission.

WN: Of your four jobs, that was the best thing?

MI: Yes, I think so. Easiest. I like to sell, you see. Then, when I got out of Maui Dry Goods Over there--as I told you--I was a bookkeeper, buyer, and selling. Liquor came in in 1932, and we opened (a liquor department). That's where I learned. Then, I opened my own shop.

WN: What caused you to go into insurance business?

MI: Oh, (because I thought that this was an easy challenge to make money).

Those days, I didn't have to go to school or anything, and I don't have to get any license. You just sell, and then you got your commission. They gave me (all kinds of) pamphlets (about selling insurance). Now, you have to get all kinds of tests and pass before you can sell. I made (enough) money in the store (by that time). (So, I quit selling insurance.)

WN: So, while you had your liquor store, you were still selling insurance for little while?

MI: Yes, I think so.

WN: You were saying, the reasons why you did all these jobs was because you had to pay your father's debts, and you had to support your brothers and your parents. Any other reasons why you felt you had to make more money than you were making at Maui Dry Goods?

MI: No, not particularly. Those days, I had no time to think of future like that. I had to fight for my existence--just to get along. (Laughs) But God is good. Now, I take it easy. I play golf and go wherever I want--China, (Russia). I'm really blessed. I worked hard, but to me, I don't mind so much. I didn't mind. That was no burden or like that.

WN: While you were working all these jobs, did you think that you would start your own business someday?

MI: Yes, I think so. Because I used to read so much magazines and books, and self-employed is the best way to make money, they said.

WN: When you started the business, do you remember about how much money you had saved up?

MI: You mean, after the war [World War II] was over and all that?

WN: No. You know, you started Paia Liquor Store in 1937, yeah?

MI: Yes. At that time, I had \$2,000 (saved in bank). So, I bought the (liquor) stock in cash.

WN: And as far as the location of the liquor store was concerned . . .

MI: Rent was cheap, those days--thirty-five dollars a month. Then, I had some carpenter made those shelves, and then, I just opened.

WN: Did you have to borrow any money at all?

MI: Yes, because I didn't have no money. But, I bought that house for my mother. Let me think, now. That house that my brother lives, that's where I made that home for my mother. That was after my father died.

WN: He died in 1928?

MI: Yes, 1928, he died. With the insurance money, I bought the land from Mr. Watanabe. And then, I made that house for \$1,800. When I made that much--I think I had \$5,000 or something--so I asked my mother. You see, those days, we were taught to be good to your father and mother. Be grateful for them because they brought us up, and then they fed us and took care of us. We had to pay back all those things. That was the whole thing in my mind--to pay them back. So, I asked my mother whether she wants to go to Japan as she's never been (there). So what she wants to do . . .

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MI: So, I asked her what she wants to do. She says, no, she doesn't want to go Japan.

I told her, "Well, if you don't want, you want a small house so we can live together?"

"Yeah," she said.

So, I (built) that house.

WN: For . . .

MI: Eighteen hundred [\$1,800]. Cheap. Three-bedroom home.

WN: Did you pay all of that in cash?

MI: Yes. I never bought things in installments, because if I die, somebody else got to suffer. Even now, if I buy a car or anything, if I don't have money, I won't buy. You, too, you better (chuckles)

WN: Nowadays, cannot help. You know, when you had all those plenty jobs, did other people have plenty jobs like you did? Were there lot of other people that did that?

MI: I don't think so. They didn't have to, I think. Not those girls or boys that I knew.

WN: When you started the liquor store down in Lower Paia--the original location--do you remember who was there before you?

MI: You mean, my own one? My own liquor store or the Maui Dry Goods?

WN: Your own store.

MI: No, nobody was there. So, I had to put up the shelves, as I told you. Hired a carpenter. It's a small store. Now, somebody else bought that building, selling liquors in there.

WN: But the building was already there?

MI: Yes.

WN: But it was vacant? It was a vacant building?

MI: Yes. That portion was vacant. Then, across, I rented another place, and I had two. And then, I put one more here [the present location], so I had three.

WN: At one time?

MI: (After a year or so.)

WN: How long after you started the first one did you start the second one?

MI: Oh, gee, I don't remember, but must be around four or five years later, (1942 or 1943).

WN: Okay. Were there other liquor stores in Lower Paia at that time when you started?

MI: Oh, when I started, I don't think there was any, except the Maui Dry Goods one. And then, when the war came, there was Japanese fella that had a small liquor store, but he got closed down because he was an alien. I bought all his liquors. And a Portuguese store was here. Before I bought this area, a big theater (was here. Mr. Souza had a liquor store in it. He sold groceries and dry goods, too.)

WN: You mean, up here [in the upper portion of Lower Paia]?

MI: Yes, right here. I bought that liquor store and all, and I opened the third (store in this place). That must be around 1948, I think, after the war. Nineteen forty-five [1945], the war ended.

WN: So, you had three at one time, yeah? Who was working for you and watching the other two stores?

MI: I had one girl down there, and one boy taking care this one.

WN: The present one?

MI: Yes. Then, the other one, I used to go there (and run it). But, in 1953, I sold those two, and then closed this old one, and I built this new one, over here.

WN: The present one? Nineteen fifty-three [1953]?

MI: Yes, present one. in 1953.

WN: Okay, we can get into that little later, but I'd like to go back to the wartime. You said that business really got good, yeah? Why

was that?

MI: (During the war, each civilian person had a permit to buy liquor--one quart of hard liquor or one case of beer in one week. We sold all what we had in one day. Then, when new supply came in, we sold all again.) After the war (ended, the servicemen could) all buy the liquor, too. And I was the only store. You should see, they lined up, you know.

WN: The soldiers?

MI: Yes, 60,000 Marines over there (in Peahi), and another thirty, thirty-five thousand soldiers and sailors on (Puunene) side. In one day's time, they cleaned up all our supply.

WN: You mean, the soldiers could buy liquor?

MI: Yes, they gave permission. They bought so much cases of liquor, truck after truck. That night they shot one another. There's a big gulch in between the other side and this side (where they camped). There were two battalions there. Seems like, the Indians, when they drink, they got crazy, so they separate from the white soldiers.

WN: The Indians?

MI: Yes, Indian soldiers. That (day), in September, I think, they (allowed them to buy). The treaty was signed on August something, on Missouri. You remember?

WN: To end the war?

MI: Yes. The peace treaty. They shot one another. Six got killed. Yes, that's true.

Then, General Harland Smith came down (to my place and he said), "Mae, I'm going to close your store. You're responsible for killing those soldiers. They drank and fought, shot one another, and they got killed."

I said, "No, General, I have the license--legitimate license. If I don't sell, they go to someplace else. That's (how) American enterprise is run," I told him. "If you close me, the civilians going to make lots of money because they will buy and sell to them [soldiers] for higher price--double or triple the price. Anyway, they want to drink, (and you can't stop them), General," I told. "So, you cannot close (my store), but even if you close, it doesn't work," I told him. He didn't close me. (Chuckles)

WN: So, all the time during the war, the soldiers were allowed to buy liquor?

MI: Yes. Abolished that (prohibition). But they didn't stay long,

after that.

WN: You said, they would clean you out of your stock?

MI: Yes, in one day's time.

WN: One day, like how much gross would you make during the war?

MI: I sold, I think, the highest was (\$6,000).

WN: In one day?

MI: Yes. Because cases by cases, you know. And I got all that stock from them, you see? From the Officers Club of the Marines. You know, Officers Club, they buy so much and stack up. General Smith sent this lieutenant (to see me)--I forgot his name. You know, I have that picture yet. You know the Mt. Suribachi one--the big picture? They gave me that, too. Lots of glasses and all that.

He said, "General wants to sell to you all--stock, barrel--everything to you."

I say, "Sure, that's all right, but certain things I don't want to buy. I tell you what you do. You fly all around the Hawaiian Islands, and you sell these item."

I mark 'em all, you see? Those liquers. Pernod, Three Star Hennessy Cognac, and all those high-priced stuff. Benedictine, all those liquers, after dinner kind. For Maui, (they are) not good sellers. Few people buy. So, I took all the whiskey, and rum, or gin, scotch whiskey. That's how I got all those good things. He sold all the unsellable kind (to others).

WN: The Officers Club sold to you?

MI: Yes.

WN: How did the Officers Club get their whiskey?

MI: Well, they have their own plane. Got from Honolulu headquarters, as much as they like.

WN: This is when the war is ending? That's why they sold it to you?

MI: Ended, yeah.

WN: So, one good day was \$6,000 gross?

MI: Yeah, about that, I think, gross, (while the stock lasted).

WN: Before the war started, about how much did you gross per day?

MI: I don't know. Maybe we sold about Those days, four, five thousand dollars is big money (a month). Because everything was so cheap. Beer was maybe three and a half [\$3.50] a case. Now, it's \$10-something.

WN: What was the markup percentage of liquor?

MI: Well, whiskey and gin or brandy--good sellers--we get markup of 40, 50 [percent], some of them. Good markup. But the beer and wine, not so much. Beer, those days--now, it's pretty good markup--but those days, beer was way down. Maybe 15, 16 percent.

WN: How come beer was so low?

MI: Because we sell so much of them. Mostly poor people buy that.

WN: So, you had your three stores. How many employees altogether did you have under you?

MI: Not much. Maybe five or six. Small stores, you know.

WN: What was your operating hours?

MI: Every day, we used to work. I opened the store half past seven [7:30 a.m.]. And then, we closed 9, 10 o'clock [p.m.].

WN: During the wartime, too?

MI: Oh, no. Wartime, you can't sell all what you want. You see, you have to get the permit. Each person go to the county building and get the liquor You have to apply to get that liquor card. You allowed to buy one quart of wine or whiskey a week, you know. And one case of beer. No half-gallon or gallon, like that, you see?

WN: You mean, you could only buy one . . .

MI: (One) item a week. So, there's no chance. But I was lucky because I had the biggest quota on Maui, and everything went by quota. They turn back one year, and I used to put down everything (on sale slips). And then, at the end of the month, I added up and paid gross income tax on that. Lots of people, didn't put down because they didn't want to pay the tax. So, they (added up the sale slips of the month of) April of 1940, and then they based the quota on that. So I got the biggest quota.

WN: Because you sold the most in the past?

MI: No. I put down everything, so, naturally, I put down what I sold. That's the true facts. So, it pays to be honest.

WN: So, if you could bring home only one case of beer a week, how did you . . .

MI: A week. If you make a mistake and you sell two, you had to pay big fine. And they (close) your store if too much mistakes. Because (the customers) go from my store to the other store. If this person, the buyer, goes to this other Maui Dry Goods and come to my place, and I give another one, I have to pay fifty dollar fine if I am caught. And then, second offense, maybe, \$100. But I was lucky, I never got caught once.

WN: You mean, you could bring home one case a week from the wholesaler?

MI: No, no. I can go and buy my quota, but . . .

WN: Oh, one person could buy?

MI: Yes. One person. You know, the retailer sell to the buyer one case. But, for myself, I had fifty cases of beer a month and so many cases whiskey. It goes on the quota, too. I can't buy all what I want. They have the figures (of each store). They divide that, see? Because they don't come from Mainland much because the war. They'll get attacked on the ocean.

WN: So, when you went to the wholesaler, you got the most because you had the highest quota?

MI: On Maui, yeah.

WN: So, if someone was limited to one case of beer a week, how you kept track of what you sold to somebody?

MI: No, you stamp. We had that card, and then we put that date, this week. For instance, today is twenty-eighth. We put, "February 28, one case beer," and I put, "Paia Liquor Store." (Stamped.) There's a place to stamp. We put our stamp there. So, he can't buy until next week--go to any store. Then, when it's full, they turn in the card and get another one. That's the time they check, you see?

WN: So, everybody had a card, then?

MI: Yes, you can't buy without the card. But lots of people had cards to make money, because there's so many armed forces here. They all want to buy, so they pay big money. [Whether the people] don't drink or not, they all had cards. When the liquor comes in, you see them. That's [i.e., the line] long, boy. Maybe one mile long. And when that quota is gone, we closed the door, and we go and play golf. Seldom we opened until noontime, I think. We open as soon as we get, and then, noontime, it's all gone. That's the best way. No charges, everything cash. Only thing, you had to be careful. Look twice (at the cards), you know, that they (were obeying the law).

WN: So, did you sell just liquors? Did you sell anything else besides liquor?

MI: No, that's all. Of course, later, here and there, that's the potato chips and like that. Potato chips. You can sell, but not much profit in those things.

WN: Did you provide the bars in town with liquor?

MI: Only when they ran short, we used to get half-gallon and gallon. We get the permit and sell that to them. Because, in those days, we had hard time to get liquor--the good liquor.

WN: "Those days" is what? Wartime?

MI: Wartime.

WN: But the bars depended on you for their liquor, or they went somewhere else?

MI: I don't think the bars had liquor, though. I don't think bar was opened.

WN: How about not in wartime? Regular time?

MI: Oh, you mean, after the war? No, after the war, they can buy all what they want--they need. We can buy, too.

WN: I mean, did the bars come to you to buy their liquor?

MI: No. I thought you meant was during the war. That's how we got rid of the half-gallon. We sold to the bar--the Officers Club. I opened one club for them in Spreckelsville. For the lieutenants and all that--for army. I sold them all those half-gallon and gallon. I got the permit. All retail, too, not wholesale price.

WN: But what about the local bars in town?

MI: No, I don't think they can operate during the war. After the war, yeah. After the peace treaty was signed, then, I think they opened.

WN: What about the wholesalers? Who were your wholesalers?

MI: During the wartime, all from Honolulu, we used to buy. You know, Von Hamm Young liquor department, and this Hawaiian Oke and Liquors, and Primo Beer factory. Liquors from the liquor department, McKesson, and then, Muller and Phipps. You see, they carry certain brands, you have to buy from that agency. Like Canadian Club, we had to go to American Factors, and Von Hamm Young had that White Label Scotch, which used to be good seller, those days. And then, Muller and Phipps, they sell drugs and all that, but they carried the Black and Red Label Johnny Walker Scotch.

WN: Did you pay cash to them?

MI: No, we charged by month. If you don't pay within twenty-one days,

you cannot charge no more. That's the law, even now. You had to pay. Same thing like cash. You allowed three weeks to pay.

WN: What about delivery service? Did you provide any kind of delivery service?

MI: During the war, no. When I opened my store in Lower Paia--when I went my own--we used to deliver scotch in gallons.

WN: When? Before the war?

MI: Yes, before the war. Nineteen thirty-seven [1937]. Yes, in 1937, I opened. That's right. Now I remember, I got the book.

WN: Can you describe your delivery service?

MI: You know, this Sheriff Silva used to have a daughter, and we played golf, or played tennis, or go swimming. She's black-haired, nice, pretty girl. She and I started this business. She worked for me. While I'm minding the store, she goes and deliver. You see, Makawao and all that. Wherever those rich people lived. Sometimes, I went myself, and she watched the store. Then, we make out the slip, and then they pay. We don't charge any of those deliveries.

WN: They would pay on delivery?

MI: Yes.

WN: How would they order it? They would order by phone?

MI: Yes, phone.

WN: How about the poorer people? Did you deliver to the camps, too?

MI: Yes. That one, you had to charge, and payday, they paid. They got the pay, and then they pay the charged amount once a month.

WN: Oh, for the liquor?

MI: Yes. Those days, everything was by monthly. Now, it's [payday] bi-monthly--two monthly payments. I mean, half-month payments.

WN: What if somebody didn't pay? What did you folks do?

MI: Cut off the credit. And we won't make that tax form for them, so they'll come back. You see, we did favors for them, so they'll be all messed up if they don't pay. I won't give the service--make tax return for them and all that.

WN: Yeah, you said you did tax returns for lot of people. About how many people were you doing tax returns for?

MI: Maybe around 150, 200. We have all this Camp 10, Camp 2. Mostly

Filipino customers. They're the best, you see. They're mostly single, and they work hard. They bought liquor just to relax. And then, this happened when I just started.

I saw this man with one letter, and he said, "Morita, you come and see this letter. What the government say?"

Say, "Oh, you don't pay [taxes] for four years. You pay big tax, and then you have to pay penalty."

Then, he get surprised and he says, "I don't know what tax is."

You see, those days, they don't send that W-2 or anything. Then, I thought I better start get the paper and make for them before they get more debts, you know, in deep. Yeah, lots of them, I made for them. They went back to Philippines. You had to--those days--have to have about two years tax return receipts before they can leave Hawaii. I got all those things ready for them, and then, they went back. But, lots of them go back to Philippines, but they don't come back. Now, (there is) not much Filipino workers because they don't import them much. And they have children and That's about forty, forty-five years ago. You weren't born, yet. (Chuckles)

WN: Of the people that you did tax returns for, you knew all of them personally?

MI: Yes. They bring their (papers that shows) what they earned. They keep all that receipts. Then, I add all that up. Then, you pay the tax. In those days, was cheap because only you pay 4 or 5 percent.

The war came, and then the tax. You remember, the President [Franklin] Roosevelt told that [Henry] Morgenthau--the Secretary of State. He's a Jew, and a smart man. He said, "You have to do something. You losing too many taxes. People don't pay taxes." They made everybody pay tax after the \$25,000. Higher and higher. That's why it's still same way. You make over \$25,000, you pay big tax. Up to that amount, it's pretty good. You don't pay so much.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Did you charge the people at all for this service?

MI: Tax? (No, never. Even now, no charge.)

WN: Oh, you're still doing it today?

MI: Yes, because if they go to anybody and they don't know, look how much they are missing. Like the other day, she say she's lucky because she's getting eighty dollars for her husband and herself. Two over 65, retired.

I tell 'em, "How much do you make?"

"I make about \$240 a year." Interest only, no social security.

WN: So, the plantation people, they would just walk into the store and say, "Can you do my tax return?"

MI: You mean, to my place? Yes, but I don't if they don't buy from us. You know what I mean? You have the tape on?

WN: Yeah. So, the people that you did taxes for, those are the ones that you gave credit to?

MI: Yes. Otherwise, there's no end, you know. You make big business, but uncollectable. Waste of time.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Were there other people doing this kind of service like you were doing?

MI: I don't think so. They have no time. I have to have all kinds of motivation so that I can make money by pulling our customers to my place. To do that, you have to do something that all the other stores don't do. That's the secret of good business. You know what I mean, yeah? There's all kinds of way. Unless some people have that motivation, try new ways or like that, and think how this business works, then it's all right.

WN: What other things did you do?

MI: Oh, do errands for them. If I go to Kahului, if they want something (groceries, etc.), I get for them.

WN: Was this mostly for Filipinos?

MI: Mostly Filipinos. Lots of Hawaiians and Portuguese, too. They need some money, sometimes--ten or fifteen dollars--they cannot pay light bill or like that, I loaned them, because I know they'll pay me.

WN: So, you had to know somebody first before you let them charge?

MI: Yes, sure.

WN: Did you do anything else--any other kind of favors for the customers?

- MI: I don't remember, but I do anything what they ask--if I can, that's it. I also write letters for them. If they cannot read the letter, I read it for them--explain to them. But, main thing, be kind to them. They don't need much to make them happy and come to you.
- WN: You would write letters for them?
- MI: Yeah, type out.
- WN: In English?
- MI: English or Japanese, if they want. I can write Japanese, too.
- WN: What system did you use for bookkeeping?
- MI: Double entry. I went to high school, and I took that bookkeeping (course). In homemaking text, I read that they had the instruction book. You get free from them. Now, you can get booklet number 17--that thick book--it tells you everything (about taxes).
- WN: But as far as double entry bookkeeping is concerned, did you always do double entry?
- MI: No, that's cash and credit.
- WN: Did you ever do just single entry?
- MI: The money come in and the money go out, that's double entry.
- WN: Yeah, but did you always do it that way?
- MI: Yes, was small business.
- WN: There wasn't any time when you just did the single entry?
- MI: No. I had to post what I paid, because every week, we buy something. Whatever I pay, I had to write down, and then we deduct. Then, we see if we are making money. Once a month, you take stock. Whatever you have and whatever you paid out, and then, you subtract that from the inventory last time--makes the profit.
- WN: So, once a month, you knew how much you were making?
- MI: Yes. Lots of people, they make mistakes because they don't know bookkeeping. And they keep on, keep on, just struggling along. Then, they don't know where they are--whether making money or not. But that's the main thing--the bookkeeping. You have to know bookkeeping in order to make self-employed business make profit.
- WN: What are some of the secrets that you had, or what important things to know when you keep the books?
- MI: Be honest. Whatever you receive, you put down. Always see that

you make profit. Otherwise, you are not going to waste your time to just sell, and you have no pleasure of making money.

WN: So, would you conduct inventory once a month?

MI: Yes, end of the month, I take inventory. Doesn't take long, you know. Maybe one or two hours. That's the most important thing in business.

WN: Did you have any problems with things like shoplifting?

MI: Well, once in a while, the kids come and steal gum or anything, but that, you have to expect. That's human nature. You see, our business, those days, was different. They can't go in the high-price stuff and walk away with the things, because it's behind the counter. Not like the supermarkets now. Oh, millions of dollars a year, they (shoplifting). I used to own the store, so I can tell when people shoplift.

Once, I told [the owner] in this store [that someone was shoplifting]. The owner told me, "That's none of your business," he tells me. "If you have store and if they don't steal, you not making money." (Laughs) After that, I never approach anybody. "You have to expect that," he says, "that's good omen that they are stealing." And this lady comes in and tries on the slipper, and then she walks away with the slippers without paying. She lives around there. I told him that, too. And then, he doesn't mind. And the warehouse is all open, and they are taking by bags--the rice and all that.

WN: You said that your stock was behind the counter? Everything?

MI: Yes. Of course, some things are in the show window, like that, but it's closed, too. People who are stealing now is a big problem today, especially children.

WN: When you started your own liquor store, you had to get a cooler, right? Did you have to get refrigeration?

MI: Yes.

WN: Did you have that from the very beginning?

MI: Yes, you had to have it for beer. After the war, we had to get some ice maker for those ice cubes. From the water, they make the ice, and (cubes) come out. We packed in the bags and sell out. Used to be thirty-five cents. Now, it's ninety-five cents. Big bag like that.

WN: Besides getting the ice maker, what other improvements did you make since you started the store?

MI: Buy new cash register. Buy some desks. New typewriter, adding machine.

WN: This is mostly after the war?

MI: After the war, yes.

WN: How about advertising? Did you do any kind of advertising?

MI: Yes, pretty much, advertising. That's another important thing in business. You see, those days, we had to compete with the big stores, like this plantation stores and all that. In order to get our customers in, I buy so many cases of liquor with only my label. You can do that today, too. And then, I put my own label with my (store) name on. And then, I sell that. You see, not everybody can sell that at that price, because they don't have that brand. Got to be good, and you sell them little cheaper, and then they [customers] come. That's the way I used to do.

Otherwise, you can't compete with these people--the good brands. Because the more you buy, the situation is now back again. Now, they doing the same thing. Whoever get the big cash, they can compete with the supermarkets. They can cut down price. During our time, that's the same thing that we had to do. But when the Fair Trade Act came in, after the war, then I didn't have to do that.

WN: So, what did you do?

MI: As I told you, I buy one brand of good whiskey or gin, and I put my own label. Mine was Golden Eagle whiskey.

WN: But who would you buy the whiskey from?

MI: From the wholesaler, (who got it from distillers).

WN: There would be no brand on it?

MI: They bottle that for me--special for me--in the factory. But you have to buy 100, 250 cases--one crack, you see? Then, they gave me special price, cash, and then, get my (store) name--my own brand.

WN: That was cheaper than . . .

MI: Oh, yes, cheaper, and the taste is same as the better quality. This Longs Drugs get that idea now. They have their own brands. That's the way to do. They sell lots of rum and brandy--their own (labels)--and nobody else can. And theirs are cheap.

WN: So, anybody could do that?

MI: Yes, but you need lots of money.

WN: To buy plenty?

MI: Yes. And you have to know the people--what kind of taste (they like). I don't drink myself, but I make them try--about ten, fifteen people--and then, I get their opinion. That's the only way. I, myself, I never drank, and I don't think I can take it. Even beer, it's bitter. Once, I tried, but.

WN: Besides the plantation store, who else were your competitors?

MI: Over here? As I say, this guy that own this hotel. Used to be hotel, but he remodeled that. He used to sleep in one side. The store was here, and the liquor store was right next. This was big building, you know. Used to be a hotel. Then, I bought that. I bought out whole thing, because he died and the wife tried to sell. She wanted \$50,000, but, those days, things were cheaper. Right after the war, you see?

And I told her, "You go all over Hawaiian Islands and try and sell for \$50,000. If you cannot sell, you come back and I will give you \$15,000."

So, I knew she cannot sell because she's not good saleslady. So, this was good luck. Premium acre. With this big hotel, and this house was there, too. I bought all for \$15,000. That's cheap, you know. Then, I tore all that down, and out of that, I made two homes behind there. Because the hotel building was made in the olden days, there were no termites. Then, I sold all those property in the back.

WN: Who was your competition in those days?

MI: He was my competition, and then there was another Portuguese man. He died, too--that Medeiros. He had another one.

WN: He had a liquor store?

MI: Liquor store, down here, small one. But he died, too. And then, this Nagata Store--you know, right next to me, used to be--he (opened one, too). And then, the Economy Store.

WN: You mentioned before that you advertised. How did you advertise?

MI: In the Mau News--that we have liquor, our special brand, and cheap, and good to try for parties and all that. So, whenever they have party, we sell lots of whiskey. At the same time, they buy the beer, see? You have to do something that no other stores do, otherwise, you won't survive.

WN: Were you ever asked to donate anything? You know, for organizations or during strikes or anything like that?

MI: Yes, they used to come. When they had the union.

WN: After the union formed?

MI: Yes.

WN: You mean, during the 1946 strike?

MI: Yes. We had to donate money, because they [strikers] cannot eat, otherwise. They all went around and collected money. Go to the farmers, get cabbages, and they had the soup kitchens, too.

WN: So, about how much money would you donate?

MI: Maybe twenty, twenty-five dollars.

WN: Did most businesses around here donate?

MI: Yes. Because they were our chief customers, those union members.

WN: Did you donate anything else? Like liquor or anything like that?

MI: No, there's a law. You cannot give away liquor. [Whenever] they have golf tournament like that, you cannot donate. You have to give them money mostly.

WN: What about the other stores? Did they give money or goods?

MI: Same thing. If they wanted liquor, with that money, they can buy. That's not our business, see?

WN: Did you do anything else during the strike? Like did you give them more credit, things like that?

MI: Yes. There are people that we charged. Those are the things you have to expect and do. You know, not human when they all right and you give them credit, and when they sick or like that, you cannot just cut them off.

WN: When did you leave the business?

MI: Nineteen seventy-two [1972], I think, 1972. All that time I was looking for somebody to take over my business, but nobody seemed to care in my family. If I ever wanted to sell, they offered me big money, you know--\$185,000.

WN: Who's "they"?

MI: This real estate people. This particular real estate lady came to me about eight times. She begged me to sell, because she knows two Florida brothers, "They retired, and they fell in love with your store and the house behind." I paid only about \$20,000 altogether. No, not even \$20,000, I think. Five thousand [\$5,000] for that and \$9,000--\$14,000. But I want some of my family to hold onto it because you can make good living out of this place. Because there's a big parking space.

Then, I put my nephew--my brother's boy--through college, and he graduated, got married. He was teaching, and then he told his father he wants to come back to Maui to work for the state. You know, HSTA [Hawaii State Teachers Association] or something--take care of the union. So, he runs the store nighttime, and daytime, he works HSTA.

WN: This present location, when you opened it, about 1950, you said?

MI: Yes, about that.

WN: When did you close your other two locations?

MI: Oh, long before that. Right after the war, I came up here, I told you. I bought this place.

WN: So, as you look back at what you did--your work, and your business, and so forth--how do you feel about what you accomplished?

MI: Well, I feel that I accomplished my aim in my life. I have nothing to regret. I learned a whole lot. In 1953, I got married, you know. Because my parents, Japanese style, wanted me to get married so many times. You know, those days, people come. You don't know the person, but they want to make matchmaker and all that. I say, "How am I going to leave this family and go off getting married?" Because I cannot tell my husband to support them and all that. No, I cannot do that. Then, my father died and my mother died in 1947, I think. So, I thought I can take little breathing spell. I hired two ladies to run this store, and then I went for vacation. I went to New York and all that places with another lady friend from Wailuku. Then, 1953, I got married to this boy, here. So, I think I'm very lucky girl. I'm healthy at my age. You remember how old I am, eh? (Laughs)

WN: You don't look it.

MI: I still can walk and see places. Whatever I want to do, I can do it now.

WN: So, you said that you think you accomplished your goal in life. What was that goal?

MI: To take good care of my own family. To make them happy, and then help them. Put them through schools as much as I can. At the same time, make some money to take care myself. Because in this life, you have to be independent, you know. You don't want people to fuss over you. "Oh, this old lady, we don't want to stay with her, but we have to take care of her" and all that. But, I think, if you take care yourself and know what you do in your life--you know, set one goal--then you'll get it done somehow.

WN: Well, thank you very much.

MI: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

**STORES and
STOREKEEPERS of
Paia & Puunene, Maui**

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

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